Interview with Walter Galenson

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project Labor Series

WALTER GALENSON

Interviewed by: Morris Weisz

Initial interview date: March 15, 1992

Q: Today is Sunday, March 15, 1992, on a nice warm day in Florida and this is Morris Weisz and I am interviewing Professor Walter Galenson of Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, who has had early experience as a labor officer, mostly in Norway, but has been dealing with the whole field of international labor for a long time. Walter, will you please give us a brief summary of your career?

GALENSON: I was a Labor Attach# for a very short period. I started in Norway and in Denmark. I covered both countries beginning in June 1945 and I left the [Foreign] Service in September 1946. So it was a little over a year. That's all.

Q: Before that you had been a professor or a teacher?

GALENSON: Before the war I was a professor at Hunter College in New York. During the war I worked in various government agencies and then I went into the [Labor Attach#] program.

Q: And you left just after a year's service as a Labor Attach# in Norway and covering also Denmark?

GALENSON: Yes.

Q: You then wrote a couple books?

GALENSON: I wrote a book on Norway and a book on Denmark.

Q: Published by? I am saying this so students will be able to look into your history.

GALENSON: Published by the Harvard University Press.

Q: Harvard University Press in that same series that Horowitz's was on Italy...

GALENSON: ...and Lorwin's on France.

Q: ...which we remember well. After leaving the service, you began teaching directly at Cornell?

GALENSON: No. I taught for five years at Harvard, then I taught for 15 years at Berkeley, and since then I have been at Cornell. Although I am retired now, for the last 10 years I have been teaching at a Cornell program in New York City

Q: Could you go over the origin of your becoming a Labor Attach#? Please give specific reference to the consideration given to nominating you for the Soviet Union. The reason for this question is what happened later concerning the difficulties of getting somebody into the Soviet Union?

GALENSON: During the war I worked for a while in the Pentagon and then I moved over to the OSS and there I worked in the Russian Division of the Research Section of the OSS, which, as you know, was the predecessor of the CIA

Q: Did you know Russian before?

GALENSON: Yes, I had learned Russian as part of my graduate program at Columbia University. We were required then to know two foreign languages, so I learned French and Russian. That's why I went into the Russian Section, because they wanted people who knew some Russian. There weren't many.

Q: Did your Russian heritage give you any knowledge of Russian?

GALENSON: No, both my mother and father came from Russia, but they never spoke Russian at home. I didn't know a word, but I studied it. Sometime in the beginning of 1944—I don't remember exactly; it was so long ago—some way I heard about this new program they were starting in the State Department [called] the Labor Attach# Program. Either that or someone told me about it. In any event, I got in touch with...

Q: Had you been teaching labor economics?

GALENSON: Before? Yes.

Q: So that your specialty was labor?

GALENSON: That's correct. My thesis was on labor.

Q: What was your thesis on?

GALENSON: It was called, Rival Unionism in the United States.

Q: Oh, I remember that. That's a different part of my history and yours as well. Just to identify it for the possibility of use by students, it would be located where?

GALENSON: Any good library. It was published as a book. I heard about this program one way or another. In any event I went over to the State Department. What was the name of the chap who was running the program then?

Q: Otis Mulliken?

GALENSON: Otis Mulliken. That's the guy. He suggested that I be designated as the Labor Attach# to the Soviet Union. That appealed to me. The OSS had been sending some people over to Moscow. There was a fellow named Tom Whitney, for example, who worked in our division in OSS. He went over there and he stayed on. He married a Russian woman and stayed on and became a pretty well known journalist on the Soviet Union. But the idea of going to Russia was interesting since I knew Russian, so I said, “Fine.” I was appointed the Labor Attach# to the Soviet Union. This was sometime during the spring or middle of 1944, I guess.

Q: During the war, so we were still on relatively friendly terms with the Soviets?

GALENSON: We were still on friendly terms, right, with [ships] going through to Murmansk and they were accepting Americans there one way or another. So I moved over to the State Department. At that time the entire State Department was in what is now the Executive Office of the President building on 16th and Connecticut there. That was the entire State Department.

Q: At 17th and Pennsylvania and it is now the OMB building.

GALENSON: OMB. Isn't that in the Executive Office of the President?

Q: Yes, well that's part of OMB

GALENSON: In any event I was ushered into a very large room there which at that time contained the entire Russian division in the State Department. They had practically no Russian speaking officers. They were all in that one room. Tommy Thompson, Durbrow...

Q: Did he speak Russian at that time?

GALENSON: He [Thompson] did. Durbrow, Thompson and Bohlen and myself. We were sharing that room. They all subsequently became Ambassadors to the Soviet Union. That was the entire staff.

Q: Kennan was in Moscow itself.

GALENSON: He was in Moscow itself. That's right. That was the entire Russian Division of the State Department, believe it or not. There I sat. I worked on the language a bit. I accumulated the stuff I needed. I had a tremendous list you had to take with you. Toilet paper. The big thing was the stopper for the tub. All sorts of things like that. So I gathered it all together. There I sat waiting for a visa. And I sat there for around six months. No visa. Nothing. Finally at the beginning of 1945, Harriman came back... He was the Ambassador then. He came to the United States and I went to see him and I said, " Mr. Ambassador, what's with my visa. When am I getting over there?" He said, "If I were you, I wouldn't wait. Vyshinsky says you are a Trotskyite and I doubt very much whether you will ever get a visa."

Q: They evidently read your book on the split in the American labor movement.

GALENSON: No, it wasn't so much that. There were several things, I think. They had very good information. For example, my thesis supervisor at Columbia was a member of the Dewey Committee that was monitoring the Soviet show trials during the 1930s, Paul Brissenden. But even more than that, I guess, when I was teaching in New York, I joined the American Federation of Teachers. They had a special local for the college teachers. It was a big local. It had about 1,100 members. There was only one problem with it. It was run lock, stock and barrel by the Communist Party. Morris U. Schappes was the big gun, and Lewis Feuer, who at that time was a Communist. I went to some of the meetings and it was perfectly clear that the [Communist] Party was running it. First of all they would run [meetings] till midnight when everybody was gone and they would adopt resolutions tying us up with every left wing outfit. That was standard operating procedure.

Q: What had given you this sophistication about Communist things? School or even before that?

GALENSON: Standard procedure. Perfectly clear what was happening. No, I knew something about the Soviet Union from my work at the university but also from Brissenden and I had read through the transcripts of the Moscow trials. That was enough. Anyway a group of about ten of us got together and decided that we were going to break off and form a new union, and so we did. Our honorary chairman was John Dewey. There were only ten of us. A chap at Queens College, Bill Withers. Another chap, Jim Loeb, who at that time was teaching Latin at Townsend Harris High School, which was part of the City College system. He became Kennedy's Ambassador to Chile. A very nice and bright guy. The actual president whom we elected was Sidney Hook

Q: There is your Trotskyite connection right there. I can see that.

GALENSON: So with Hook we got a lot of very good publicity in the New York Times through Abe Raskin. He wrote all about us and put the Communist stuff in. The AFT yanked their charter. We had about dozen members.

Q: This was the AFT in the old days under a guy named Lefkowitz?

GALENSON: No, no, before Lefkowitz. I forget his name. I think he was one of the first Presidents of the AFT. We got the charter and they were kicked out. I think they went into the CIO Office and Professional Workers Union.

Q: But that was the origin of this allegation against you.

GALENSON: Probably, yes.

Q: You were not actually a Trotskyite?

GALENSON: No, I didn't have anything to do with Trotsky.

Q: Any political affiliation that might be relevant?

GALENSON: I didn't belong to any other organization, just the AFT, that's it. I guess that was enough for them. With John Dewey, after all, as the honorary chairman and Sidney Hook the Chairman...

Q: Why didn't Harriman tell you about this in a cable, so you could get started on leaving?

GALENSON: I don't know why he didn't. He just didn't. So that was that. It was perfectly clear that I wasn't going to go to the Soviet Union.

Q: Now the relevance of this to much later times is the fact that at later periods Jay Lovestone of the AFL and then the AFL-CIO was very much opposed to having a Labor Attach# in the Soviet Union because he felt as though this could be misconstrued as recognition of their trade unions. But that had nothing to do with your being rejected?

GALENSON: I wasn't nominated by any union. I wasn't approved by any union. I just went over there and got the job. That's the way it was done at the time.

Q: This was before the day when the AFL and the CIO really had an active part in [the assignment process]?

GALENSON: Yes, they played no role at all.

Q: Right. So you did not become the. . .

GALENSON: I did not become the first and only Labor Attach# in the Soviet Union. I don't think they ever had one.

Q: Oh, I think that in the [Labor Attach#] training program at the State Department we finally have someone going to the Soviet Union. I don't know whether he will be called a Labor Attach# or a Labor Officer but he was in 1991 training program.

GALENSON: Oh, really. In any event for many, many years they did not accept such a person. So that's how I got into the program. Well, then I went over to see Otis Mulliken and said, Look, I'm not going to Russia. What's open?" At that time unfortunately the best posts were gone. Sam Berger was in London; of course, he had been there all along; and people had been appointed already to Paris and Rome. So I said, "What's open?" He said, "Well, you can either go to Turkey or Scandinavia?" I didn't want to go to Turkey. I knew that. I didn't know anything about Scandinavia. I didn't know a single Norwegian or Dane or Swede. I never met any. I knew nothing about the languages, anyway I said, "I'll go to Scandinavia." That's how I went there. I had no training for it. No nothing!

Q: It affected your life for many, many years.

GALENSON: Yes, right. It was just pure happenstance. If some other better post had been open I would have taken it.

Q: How did you prepare for it?

GALENSON: I didn't do any preparation.

Q: Now this would have been when?

GALENSON: This would have been in the spring of 1945.

Q: Well, this was the period when your neighbor here in Florida, Haakon Lie, was going back and forth to Europe? Or was he already ensconced back in Norway?

GALENSON: No, I never met him in this country. He didn't come back to Norway until August of 1945.

Q: After the war was over?

GALENSON: That was the first time I met him.

Q: Well, that's the first time that he came back safely in 1945, because until then he was going back and forth.

GALENSON: Not to Norway, to England, yes.

Q: So you prepared yourself like you did for the Soviet Union. Reading? Language?

GALENSON: No, the language I did when I was there. I spent most of the summer of 1945 studying Dano-Norwegian. I had a tutor and I worked every day. It's a very simple language. After a couple of months I could get along pretty well.

Q: Yes, but there is also the fact—at least in my experience in Norway—that you can get along so well there with English.

GALENSON: Yes, that's right. You really didn't need the language particularly, but on the other hand I wanted to read the newspapers.

Q: And you wanted to get down deeper than the leadership which knew English.

GALENSON: Yes, that's right. Also it's very important to read newspapers.

Q: I was shocked one time when Haakon Lie, the Labor Party head for many years, invited me to some executive meeting of the Labor Party. I walked in, was introduced to a number of people I didn't know, and they proceeded to talk English for the benefit of their visitor!

GALENSON: Yes, it's the second language in Scandinavia. German used to be the language but now it's [English].

Q: Now it's English. So you began your career just months before the end of the war?

GALENSON: I went over on a Norwegian boat to England and as we were going over there they were broadcasting that the Germans were beginning to surrender.

Q: So it was after VJ Day?

GALENSON: No, not VJ, VE. It was in May of 1945

Q: Oh, yes. Europe was first. You're right.

GALENSON: In fact, I got to England and I remember walking around London with Sam Berger in a complete blackout. We could hardly see anything but he took me over to the City to see all the damage that had been done there. Then I went up to one of the air fields and I got on a plane to Stockholm. There were American Air Force planes flying to Stockholm then. What they were doing was they were taking pilots over there. A number of pilots who had been on bombing missions had managed to land in Sweden. They couldn't fly back to England, so they got into Sweden and their planes were interned, but they were permitted to leave, but now they were going back to fly their planes out. (Tape interruption)So I got a ride on one of those planes and then I took a train. I think I took the first train from Stockholm to Oslo. I got there even before the King got there.

Q: That's interesting. And you proceeded then to make contacts with trade unions, government people, etc.?

GALENSON: Yes, it was slow. I introduced myself to the trade union people, but they were awfully busy then. A number had come out of concentration camps and were not in good health and the rest of them were busy trying to figure out what they were going to do after

four years of German occupation. So I would say I spent most of the summer, two months really, working on the language.

Q: Oh, was your wife with you?

GALENSON: No, she didn't come over until the end of August and then she left in December. She wasn't there very long at all. So that was my introduction to Norway.

Q: How did your work begin? There weren't many people with your experience like starting right after the war with people who were so busy doing other things, reconstituting a labor movement, etc.

GALENSON: Well, I was required to make two reports a week. Two brief reports. Practically nothing.

Q: Who was the Ambassador there at that time?

GALENSON: A very nice guy, Lithgow Osborne. He was a friend of Roosevelt's. He had been Commissioner of Conservation in the State of New York under Roosevelt. He was a lovely man. He was not a career officer.

I met a young Norwegian Air Force Officer there...—I had a car. I brought my car over. At that time that was a jewel.—...and he suggested that we drive around and see a bit of Norway. I said, “Great.” So I went to the Ambassador and I said, “What about it?” and he said, “Go ahead. Sure. fine.” So we got into the car and we drove around Norway and I saw a bit of the country. When I got to Oslo, by the way, the Germans were still patrolling the city, only they had black armbands on. The British had occupied Norway, not we, but there were very few British troops in there. Many of the Germans were still there.

Q: The German military?

GALENSON: Yes, they were still policing with cars and the motorcycles. They still had their armbands. This was a very peculiar business. I remember I was in a small town in the south of Norway. I woke up about two in the morning. The sun was out already. This was after all June. I heard this tramp, tramp, tramp. I couldn't figure out what the hell's going on. There was the German Army marching right past my balcony carrying knapsacks and all their stuff, everything but guns, and they were marching down to the port to reembark for Germany. The Germans were still in there.

One other funny thing too. The Ambassador was an ardent golfer and I played a little golf. So he said, “Let's go play golf.” Well, it turned out that the golf course had been mainly converted to producing potatoes, just a small fairway. In addition to that the German Army was interned all around the golf course. So I would tee up and hit and I would run out ahead to make sure that the Ambassador didn't lose his ball. He had very few golf balls. All the Germans were cheering him, you know. It was bazaar.

Q: Well, how did you begin making your labor contacts. Did you concentrate on the party or on the trade unions, or on both, or on individuals who were willing to talk to you amidst all those problems they had?

GALENSON: Well, I was “taken over”. When Haakon got into Oslo, he got in touch with me and from then on I didn't have to do any seeking.

Q: We are talking about Haakon Lie.

GALENSON: They were having the first post-war election in September. Before Haakon got there the Labor Party had entered into an electoral agreement with the Communists. Joint lists. When Haakon got there, he torpedoed that one real fast, because that would have been very dangerous.

Q: Well, this was on the theory that they were our allies during the war and let's go forward [together].

GALENSON: Yes, they had met in concentration camps and made friendships and so on. Anyway one of the ways I saw a lot of the little towns in Norway was that I went electioneering with him [Haakon Lie]. He was very interested at that time in showing TVA films about how we had harnessed the water falls, because they were pushing that water fall business there. So I got a hold of some of the TVA films. We would go to small town and he would give an election speech, then I would run the machine and he would lecture. So I was... Probably illegally... When the Ambassador heard about it, he was a little bit worried, but he didn't complain. So I did see a lot of Norway. But through Haakon, I met everybody in the labor movement, Labor Party, everybody.

Q: Did it hurt your effectiveness at all, to be so closely tied to Haakon? Later on, of course, there was all that worry in the State Department that if a labor attach# became too close to one particular element within the labor movement, it might affect adversely his relationships to the others, but knowing Haakon and knowing the history of the time, that was not the case, I take it?

GALENSON: No, you see, one of the things that the Department was mostly interested in was the Communists. After all, Norway had a border contiguous to the Soviet Union. The Russians had taken over that [northern] portion of Finland.

Q: And Norway had a history of joining the Comintern until 1925.

GALENSON: Oh, yes. In fact I met Haakon's mentor, Martin Tranmael. I had long conversations with him about his experiences in the Comintern, but the Department was mainly interested in despatches about Communism, what they were doing, and, of course, Haakon was a mine of information. I could write in detail about the Communists in the country.

Q: He had no compunction about sharing his information with you?

GALENSON: None at all. He gave it all to me.

Q: But it did benefit him also to have that information getting out?

GALENSON: He [Haakon Lie] was the number one anti-Communist in Norway. He was regarded by the Soviet Union as its bitterest enemy in Norway.

Q: Did that enmity carry back at all to the 1920s?

GALENSON: He had been in Moscow briefly in the 1930s. He had also been in Spain and his Spanish experience, I think, really embittered him against Communists when he saw what they did, particularly to the anarchists in Barcelona, because the Norwegian Labor Party had kind of a strong syndicalist background and they felt close to those people. When he saw what the Communists did to them, he became very strongly anti-Communist.

Q: I forgot that he had been in Spain. But it was also not only the Communists but that left wing group that...

GALENSON: At that time there was no left wing. The main opposition was the Communists. The left wing group came when the Communists diminished. The left wing group took some time to form. The Labor Party won a big victory in September of 1945 and for several elections thereafter.

Q: You talk about the Labor Party's victory in Norway. I'm talking about Spain. There were the anarchists and that other group accused of being Trotskyites. In any event that's where his bitterness...

GALENSON: Also Tranmael had become very strongly anti-Communist and he was Haakon's main mentor. Haakon has always remained strongly anti-Communist.

Q: Oh, yes, creating some difficulties for him in recent years. Well then, he was your mentor and helped you get around.

GALENSON: He was the guy who really opened everything to me. That's correct. Now, you know, for example, I was critical of some of the things they were doing. They wanted to put up a big steel mill, which they did. It was a mistake. I argued against it, but they were convinced this was the thing to do. But there wasn't any conflict. I mean what I was doing was essentially what the Department wanted me to do.

Q: Reporting on...

GALENSON: Reporting, right. I could report on the status of the trade unions, which I did, and the status of the Party, which I did.

Q: Let's get into this...

GALENSON: And incidentally, one other thing. I recall one day Haakon—this was in I guess the winter of 1945—Haakon called me up and said, “How about coming out to my cabin. I've got something to discuss with you.” I said, “Okay.” So we went up to his cabin, which was cold as hell up in the mountains. No running water or anything. The Ambassador had gotten a cable from the State Department asking for a run down on Trygve Lie, who was being considered for Secretary General of the U. N.

Q: No relation to Haakon Lie?

GALENSON: No, no relation to Haakon Lie. Trygve Lie was at that time the Foreign Minister of Norway. So I called Haakon. He said, “Let's go up to my cabin and we'll discuss it.” So we went up there and he gave me the whole history of Trygve Lie, which

was, he broke with the Labor Party when they joined the Comintern. There was a Social Democratic minority which stayed out of the Comintern. So he was never in the Comintern, never a Communist. His record was clear; so we could document all of that. So I wrote a long dispatch on the history of Trygve Lie. Haakon's information came in as extremely useful [providing] in detail what Trygve Lie had been doing before the war and during the war. He was a lawyer. He had been a lawyer for the trade unions.

Q: And turned out to be a good Secretary General.

GALENSON: Yes, he wasn't too bad.

Q: Certainly not siding with the Communists.

GALENSON: No, no.

Q: Nor with the neutralists the way some of his successors did?

GALENSON: No, he was okay, but you see it was mainly because of my knowing people in the movement that I could do this. Otherwise I would have had to go to the library and even then it would have been not so easy to know exactly what Trygve Lie had been doing in the early 1920s.

Q: Where was he located then? At the UN in another capacity?

GALENSON: Who? Trygve Lie?

Q: Trygve Lie?

GALENSON: No, he was the Foreign Minister of Norway.

Q: You didn't interview him though?

GALENSON: I did. I interviewed him. He had me up to dinner at his home. We got talking. He told me a little bit about himself.

Q: Let me go back for a minute on this question of the steel mill and tell you that in the last few days I interviewed one of the Labor Department retirees, Jim Silberman, who was very active in the industrial productivity program of the Marshall Plan, and he told me about this business of foreign countries having to decide what the orientation, what the objective would be to their industrial development during the Marshall Plan period; he, too, noted that there were political decisions on where the development was to take place and we discussed briefly some of my experiences in India, much later, including when Haakon Lie visited me there. While it was logical to understand the Indians' desire to have steel capacity needed for their industrial development, it was uneconomic from my point of view, and I argued against the idea of their accepting Soviet help for the creation of a heavy machinery corporation which would produce the heavy machinery necessary to build their steel mills on the theory that they just couldn't use that amount of [steel]. Sure enough for political reasons the Russians helped them and then the plant was 70 percent under-utilized. Now the answer that was given to me always when I pointed to the economic stupidity of producing beyond their [domestic] needs was that politically they had to have this show-piece—like the small African country which has to have an airline. You know the typical thing. Now, how much of that decision, that minor disagreement you had with respect to Haakon's wanting to have steel mills and your suggesting that it might not be economically advisable, how much of that was due to Norway's feeling a need to establish itself politically as self-sufficient or self-reliable?

GALENSON: No, I don't think that was it. They set the mill up in a place on the west coast of Norway, where there was a lot of unemployment, especially among fishermen, and they wanted to provide employment. I guess they wanted self-sufficiency too, I don't know, but it was an economic decision. They thought it was going to pay. It turned out to be a white elephant.

Q: Whereas in India there were political decisions, from my point of view, which turned out to be white elephants or red elephants because the Soviets used it politically very effectively.

So you were doing the normal work of a Labor Attach# there?

GALENSON: Yes.

Q: You were working under circumstances which made it easier for you because of the common interests of the United States and Norway and because of your personal friendship with Haakon?

GALENSON: Yes, he also helped me in Denmark. He introduced me to the...

Q: Oh, you were reporting on Denmark also?

GALENSON: Both. I spent two weeks in each country. I went back and forth.

Q: Two weeks a month?

GALENSON: Yes. I got to know the people in the Social Democratic Party there and in the unions pretty well and so I had the same entree there as I did in Norway.

Q: So you had your home in Oslo and...

GALENSON: I had a small apartment in Copenhagen.

Q: Oh, really. Those are pleasant experiences, although the economic conditions at the time were rather difficult.

GALENSON: Well, I didn't suffer. I can tell you that.

Q: Not for Embassy people. Any special comment about Denmark, Danish labor, and the differences [between Norway and Denmark]? GALENSON: Yes, the Danes were much less... They didn't have a revolutionary background like the Norwegians. They were never in the Comintern. They were a moderate Social Democratic Party from the start.

Q: Had they [the Social Democratic Party] been in power anytime before the war?

GALENSON: Yes, I think so.

Q: And the Norwegians?

GALENSON: Yes. There was a Labor Government in fact [in power] in Norway when the Germans came in. But they [the Danes] were much more moderate. Now, for example, the Norwegian labor movement was sort of puritanical; because of Tranmael, in a way, they didn't drink. When I first met him, Haakon wouldn't drink anything, whereas if the Danes hadn't been able to drink beer or snaps, they wouldn't have had any Danes, you know. A completely different atmosphere.

Q: In that respect Sweden is closer to the Danes. God, they drink.

GALENSON: Yes, they do. The Danes ate a lot, drank a lot, very gemutlich. So it was a great contrast...

Q: They were more continental literally and figuratively.

GALENSON: Yeah, that's right. They were more continental. The Norwegians were just a different kind of people. After all the Norwegian Labor Party had its roots in forestry workers and fishermen and construction workers, whereas in Denmark they were factory workers and craftsmen.

Q: Yes and that association with the forests, etc., led to some sort of an affectionate feeling toward the I.W.W. in the United States.

GALENSON: That's right. They were really syndicalist to begin with and Tranmael—Haakon has written two volumes on Tranmael—and Tranmael was certainly influenced by the I.W.W. In fact he was at the founding convention of the I.W.W.

Q: In America?

GALENSON: Yes.

Q: By the way, Haakon's books are not appearing in English, are they?

GALENSON: No, unfortunately not.

Q: What about his current effort on the biography of Furuseth. [Lie is currently writing a biography of the late Norwegian-American President of the AFL Sailors Union of the Pacific.]

GALENSON: No, he's writing [all of his books] in Norwegian.

Q: That's a shame, because I think his perspective on these issues would be fascinating.

GALENSON: Yes, I think it would be interesting.

Q: Any chance of getting Minnie [Mrs. Haakon Lie] to translate them?

GALENSON: He [Lie] refuses to have it done. I proposed that we boil down...—He wrote these five volumes of [his own] memoirs.—I thought that we should boil them down to a volume, but he says he won't do it.

Q: They are selling very well in Norway, I understand.

GALENSON: He's made a lot of money. Books are very expensive there. I think he has sold 80,000 or 90,000 copies of his first and most controversial volume, which was on the post-war period when there was a conflict in the Labor Party. 80,000 in a country of three and a half or four million people. That's a good sale. And they continue to sell, and he continues to get royalties.

Q: He also continues to get criticism from some of those revisionist thinkers.

GALENSON: Oh, yes. He obviously is one of the most prominent political people in Norway. They still call him almost every day [here in Florida] to get his views on things.

Q: I know, he's interviewed over the telephone. Well, I have been spending a little time on Haakon in this conversation partly because I want to encourage any people who do some work in this [area] to get hold of those books and see whether they can summarize them.

GALENSON: They are available.

Q: You couldn't consider translating them?

GALENSON: No, what we wanted to do was that I would go through them and take out stuff which was only of parochial interest. He had a lot of international experience which was... He knew all of the post-war Socialists. He knew Bevin. He knew the guy who became the Minister of Defense in Britain, Denis Healey. Willy Brandt he knew very well. But a lot of the internal Labor Party material would not be of general interest. So I thought we would sort of boil it down. Minnie would do a rough translation, then I would finish it up, but he said, “No.” He refuses absolutely, so what can you do?

Q: When he visited us in India, he had so many contacts there too, and God knows, they weren't very active in the Socialist International.

GALENSON: It was because of the Socialist International, sure. I went to Israel once. He had called up the Secretary of the Histadrut and the Labor Party and they treated me very well, because he is very well liked in Israel, as you probably know.

Q: He certainly is and I guess I would have forgotten to put it in the tapes that are going to be done for me, but I should mention that I was once involved in trying to get Portugal to do some work in connection with the ILO and they had a luncheon of labor, management and government people at the ILO. I was trying to encourage management people to use some influence with the management people in Portugal, who had all been old fascist types. We wanted to create a new management outlook. I was sitting next to this Swedish employer representative and he told me he had a very great affection for Norway. I asked, "Why?" and he said, "Bar none the most wonderful person I know in the world is the leader of the Labor Party, a man named Haakon Lie." And I told him I knew Haakon. He mentioned—this guy wasn't Jewish—some committee to aid Israel in Sweden and described the work that Haakon was doing with the Labor people in Israel. I don't know how he knew about that. It was just a matter of admiration for the work Haakon was doing.

GALENSON: The way Haakon got started on this was interesting. Shortly after the end of the war, they were sending a lot of Jewish kids over to Sweden and Norway because they were tubercular. A plane load of Jewish kids crashed in Norway and only one kid remained alive out of about 100. A terrible tragedy. Anyway, Haakon mounted a big campaign around the name of that boy. They raised a lot of money. They bought prefab houses. He took a couple of guys down to Israel and they built a kibbutz.

Q: Oh, my Lord! But it's typical of him. He seizes a target of opportunity. You can just see him.

GALENSON: Kibbutz Norway. I met Golda Meir at his house in Oslo a number of times. They were very close friends.

Q: Well, I guess we have been spending a little time discussing Haakon and I should say —and I have no qualms about having it in our record because of your and my association with Haakon—but the other day when I telephoned about coming down here, I spoke to Minnie—Minnie Lie is the one I am referring to, the wife of Haakon Lie and a former colleague of mine at the War Production Board. Did you know that?

GALENSON: Yes, I knew that.

Q: And I said, "What are the chances of getting Haakon on tape about any of this, especially about his exciting experiences during the war?" which Joe Glazer, who was visiting you last week, told me I absolutely had to get on tape. Minnie replied, "No, he wouldn't do it."

GALENSON: No, he wouldn't do it.

Those are all things that he mentioned en passant in the mid-1940s and late 1940s when we would see him in Washington, but I just don't understand that. I am going to try him again tonight.

GALENSON: No, he wouldn't do it. You can save your breath.

Q: Really? Because it's an unpleasant experience?

GALENSON: I don't know why. He is just reluctant. Self-advertisement, I guess. He doesn't like that.

Q: Yes, he's really worried about that. Okay, we are with you in Denmark and Norway.

GALENSON: One other thing I should mention. I became very close friends with the guy who ran the Danish Employers Association, which was a very well run and powerful outfit, and through him I got to know a lot about how the bargaining system really worked there. In fact when I wrote the book on Denmark, I went back there for a couple of summers and

I worked in their library. They had wonderful stuff there and I really enjoyed knowing those people. They were very good. I knew the Norwegian employers also, but not as well as the Danes.

Q: Why did you serve only so brief a period in those countries? Less than two years in both.

GALENSON: Well, I had taken the Foreign Service exam and become a regular Foreign Service Officer and there was the question, should I [or rather] we stay in. My wife was not anxious to become the wife of a Foreign Service Officer moving around a lot and I wasn't either, to tell you the truth. It was a lot of fun meeting all these people, but there wasn't much of a challenge. In other words the amount of real work you had to do was very small. A lot of it was just schmoozing with people and, I don't know, it didn't appeal to me as the way I wanted to spend my life. And I had an opportunity to go up to Harvard and teach there. So I took it.

Q: And then from there you went to Berkeley. I had forgotten about your Berkeley experience but now I remember that in 1967 or 1969 I was coming through on my way back from India and I met you during a period that the students were very active there.

GALENSON: Yes, right. You see at that time [1946] John Dunlop had just been appointed at Harvard. Sumner Slichter was the senior guy up there. They had established a trade union fellowship program. They brought to Harvard about a dozen trade union people for a year's training from various unions, and they subsidized it. Part of my teaching was to the group. I taught economics to this group. So it was interesting. In fact I met a lot of guys who subsequently became rather important people in the labor movement, officers of unions. So with that opportunity I figured I'd rather be an academic.

Also I was not too happy with the quality of my colleagues in the Embassy. The Ambassador in Norway was a hell of a nice guy. The Ambassador in Denmark was a Wall Street character who was no good. But the regular officers were lightweights on

the whole. For example there was a very good Cultural Affairs Officer in Oslo and also another... I forget what he was... was a professor of Dano-Norwegian at Wisconsin. He was very good. But these were temporary people. But the Counselor of Embassy, the Political Officer and so on, they were kind of lightweights and I didn't want to spend my life with them. So I decided to leave. I could have stayed on, because I was a Foreign Service Officer. I have never regretted [leaving] because when I look around and see what happened to colleagues who stayed on... Of course, one of them had a terrible problem with McCarthy. That was Val Lorwin and he [felt he] had to quit. But Dan Horowitz, who wrote a very good book on... (End of Side A, Tape One)

Q: You were saying that one of your colleagues had this unfortunate experience, Val Lorwin, of having to quit and I indicated he was cleared. As one of the people who had to testify I in his..,

GALENSON: But he never would have gotten anywhere. That was perfectly clear.

Q: Absolutely. That's one of the tragedies. He felt then, correctly as it turned out, that he would be better served by leaving the [Foreign] Service entirely, and what went on subsequent to that, of course, proved it. Now, do you want to continue?

GALENSON: Well, the other guy I knew pretty well was Dan Horowitz. He had written a very good book. It was a Harvard Ph.D. thesis, as Val's was, on the Italian labor movement. We had to squeeze it out of him.

Q: Yes, well he did that in the mid-1950s, as I recall.

GALENSON: Dan became a real apparatchik in the bureaucracy.

Q: He's a very competent bureaucrat.

GALENSON: Yes, but he has never done anything else. He figured when he retired he was going to write and so on. I talked to him after he retired, but it was impossible. You know you can't change your career that much.

Q: Let's stop for a minute. (Interruption in Tape Recording)

GALENSON: In any event, he was a good scholar and he spent his time... I don't know what he did, but he ended up as Consul General in Naples, which to me, was not a great job.

Q: He performed some interesting and valuable service as the head of the Labor Attach# Service. Part of that was bureaucratic in nature, seeing to it that they were appropriately appreciated.

GALENSON: But looking around at the rest of the people whom I knew, there was one young guy—I remember we took the Foreign Service exam together—he struck me as a fairly mediocre guy, but he passed and he eventually became Ambassador to Egypt much to my amazement. Of course, the most successful one was Sam Berger by all odds. As far as I know, these were the only two people who went into the [Labor Attach#] program who ever reached the ambassadorial level.

Q: Oh, many more reached the ambassadorial level. Tom Byrne, who became Ambassador to Czechoslovakia and Norway, came out of the labor movement and into the Foreign Service. There are a few examples of that but that doesn't necessarily say that they were successful. Some people feel as though the successful ones who moved on to become ambassadors were the ones who were competent at bureaucracy rather subject matter, and I am getting some feeling of that sort from the people that we interview [in this project]. On the other hand, you could say that the people who did not become ambassadors were a little bitter about the career compromises that have to be made in order to advance to become political [officers], and one of the purposes of this project is

to get into this business—and I am going to ask you whether you have any comments on it—of first, do you accept the idea that the Government of the United States in its foreign relations should cover very adequately the issue of trade unionism, manpower and all those labor related things? And secondly, assuming your answer is yes, which I hope it is, what sort of people should the US Government recruit for that sort of work? If we are unsuccessful in recruiting people like you with an academic background, that is recruiting and keeping them, what is there in the Foreign Service milieu that should improve the possibility of getting the best of the people rather than the marginal people to come to this important area?

GALENSON: Well, it is my impression too that a fair number of people came into the program on the recommendation of the unions and they were the people who had held union offices and for one reason or another the unions would just as soon see abroad. These people were not really equipped to do the kind of a reporting job that had to be done. They could meet people and talk to them, but anyone can do that. That doesn't require much talent.

Q: What you're saying is that the talent required to become a union official is personal and political and dealing with people, rather than analytical.

GALENSON: Exactly.

Q: The trade union leader's analytical interest is understandably how to get reelected.

GALENSON: Right.

Q: And what does the leader do to make his reputation better among the workers covered by his [collective bargaining] agreements, whereas the successful Foreign Service Officer is the one who can analyze and presumably, at some future time, supervise the collection and dissemination of information, which would enable the Government to carry out on policies better.

GALENSON: There's a difference all right.

Q: But then comment on the fact that some of our more successful Labor Attach#s were people who came out of the trade unions but had that extra ability of having come into the trade unions as intellectuals, a research director or an educational director and came out of a movement such as the one I came out of, the Socialist movement or other movements, which gave them some analytical qualities. So you can't say per se that a trade union background means that a guy... I don't know, did you know Jim Killen?

GALENSON: No.

Q: He was from the Paper Workers Union, who became a big shot in the AID Mission and opposed the idea of having a labor advisor in his AID Mission, because he says, "All you get are broken down business agents." This was a trade unionist saying that. It's a mix of abilities and in some of the things I've said, in other things I've written, some of our most unfortunate colleagues were people who got so involved in the internal battles within the trade union movement that they became mistrusted by another element in that same trade union movement, so there are a variety of things that... You, for instance, were close to Haakon Lie, but at that period there was no disadvantage to being so.

GALENSON: There was no split.

Q: ...and there was no disadvantage to the US Government, whereas if you had served in a country with a split labor movement, France for instance...

GALENSON: Right, that would be a problem.

Q: You were very disappointed that you didn't get to France. Well, in France your function would have been very, very different because of the split in the labor movement there. So if you have any advice to offer us or future researchers on the question of... Assuming that it is a good idea for the US Government to cover the subjects involved, labor, manpower,

all these ancillary subjects, how does the Foreign Service select those people? What is the universe from which to pick?

GALENSON: My feeling is that that function should belong to the economic officer at the embassy. I'm not convinced that we should have Labor Attach#s all over the world. In the first place the labor movements are declining almost everywhere. Right after the war they were very important in many countries in close alliance with the Socialist Parties, but in country after country now—I am working on a study of this—it's incredible that almost every labor movement in the world has been losing members. People think it's limited to the United States. That's not true. Take a look at the Japanese. The German unions are losing members. Even the Swedish unions are losing members. The Norwegian unions are losing members. For various reasons, membership is declining. The unions no longer have the political or economic clout that they did. The problems are economic to a large extent and it seems to me that manpower ought to be within the orbit of the economic officer there.

Q: Well in some countries it is. The question is not whether the trade unions are losing strength; the question is, "What is the American political interest in covering those subjects?" even if it is to say simply the trade unions are following their own policy. They are losing strength and conceivably what they should be doing to maintain strength or to carry on activities which will substitute for the execution of that function.

GALENSON: I have an index of the quality of labor reporting. I subscribe to the Labor Department's "Trends [Reports]" They are not very good. They should be much better considering the fact that [they appear] just once a year—and these are written by experts with access to all sorts of information in the countries in which they are serving. Apart from published material, they can go to the Labor Ministry and get what they want. These are very superficial.

Q: What may—if you get the idea that I am being very defensive about this it's because I stayed longer than you did. Let me tell you what the response is on that subject, so you can comment on it. By the way identify for our record what you... You said you are doing a study of some sort?

GALENSON: Yes, it's going to be a book called, The Rise and Decline of Labor Unionism.

Q: When can we expect to see it? Who is going to publish it?

GALENSON: I have a publisher, but it's going to be a long time in preparation. I have a lot of work to do on it. I am thinking about 25 labor movements, not only in the developed countries but in developing countries too. And what's interesting there is that the only places in the world where unions are gaining are in the NICs, newly industrialized countries, in Taiwan, in South Korea, in Malaysia, in countries like that. But in all the developed countries the unions are declining. It's not an American disease. A lot of people in this country think that there is something uniquely wrong with the American labor movement. The Canadians are losing members.

Q: Well, I won't go into it now, but I do go into the issue of whether their successes were related in any way to the fact that they are low wage countries which in effect take advantage of their low wage situation in order to improve their economies.

GALENSON: No, that's not it. I am really struck by the fact that here we have a primary campaign in Michigan and none of the candidates is talking about the labor movement.

Q: Yes, Jerry Brown is beginning to talk...

GALENSON: Oh, Jerry Brown and also what's his name, the guy from Massachusetts?

Q: Tsongas.

GALENSON: Yes, Tsongas. He has a UAW jacket he walks around in, but Clinton, not a word, not a word.

Q: Well, he has to defend himself for being from a right-to-work state.

GALENSON: But the point is it doesn't seem politic to do it even in Michigan.

Q: Well, the government of course has to follow the economics. What you're saying is in following the economics it should not be simply a business of reporting on the status of the trade unions, but rather on the status of the economy and the labor aspects of that.

GALENSON: And the labor market. I mean unemployment, its causes, the impact of unions on wages, all sorts of things like that and not just writing about who's running these unions now, how many members they have.

Q: Well, now you have commented and let me say something about it, because I don't know when we will get into the record this phenomenon that the problem of these reports and the unsophisticated nature of these reports is brought about by the quality of the people reporting in many respects, but also on the function of a Foreign Service Officer. When I was in India, I did a whole lot of reporting on current political and economic events in the country, but when I was told every year that I had to file an annual report about the manpower situation, unemployment, etc., I just dashed something off, usually signed something that my Indian assistant prepared. One year I even didn't file a report at all, because I got no feedback on how it was being used, so that a year later when I got sort of a cautionary note from the Labor Department saying you haven't filed an annual report, I said, “Well, it took you a year to find that out. The way I found out that you were annoyed is that I got a printout from a computer instead of somebody saying, 'Hey, we need this for such and such an operational purpose.' “ Meanwhile, back at the ranch in the Embassy, the Ambassador has a problem with a whole lot of ongoing questions, which forces him to take the Labor Attach# away from the normal type of things that a Labor Attach# might

do and says, “Gee, forget about that. What we have to do is this today.” And the Labor Attach# works for the Ambassador and not for the Labor Department, so we have to blame the people at home who don't reflect the feeling that the reports are useful in policy development. That's my defense of the person, but you see the point I am making, I'm sure.

GALENSON: Yes.

Q: Before we get into the ILO, which I want to spend a little time on,... (interruption) Among the subjects that we may have covered completely already is the question of McCarthyism and you made you comments on that. What about the Cold War? Was it too early in those days to have the Cold War battle between the Soviet side and our side affect your work as a Labor Attach# in any way?

GALENSON: No, it wasn't. In fact the thing that the Department wanted most to hear about was the Communists. They were regarded as a threat in Scandinavia and I do recall when I was at Harvard in 1947 or 1948 I had a call from a guy who had just been appointed Ambassador to Sweden. He was a top Foreign Service Officer, Doc Matthews. He was very well known and he was just going to Sweden. He was an expert on Communism and he wanted me to go with him there as an attach# dealing mainly with the Communists. Well, I was tempted, because it was a very good opportunity to see what the Communists were doing in Sweden, but I couldn't get away from Harvard, so I had to decline, but [the Cold War] already was a big factor, right from the word go, what was going on in the Soviet Union, their attempts at penetration, and certainly. . . There was one guy in the State Department — I forget his name. — who was the resident expert on Communism and he had a lot of clout in the Department. He was an Assistant Secretary. So the Labor Attach#, at least for me, one of my main jobs was following what the Communists were doing.

Q: So the Cold War aspects did have some relevance?

GALENSON: Oh, boy, they sure did.

Q: How did your fellow officers view your function? Did they ignore you? Were they jealous of your contacts?

GALENSON: No. They had their routines. They read the newspapers. They delivered notes to the Foreign Office. I had very little contact with them as a matter of fact.

Q: You had no feeling that they resented you, like for instance, the head of the Political Section saying, "What the hell are you doing having all these contacts with the Labor Party when I really should be doing that?" None of that?

GALENSON: No, they had contacts with the other parties, after all.

Q: In Great Britain one of the problems was the separation of functions between the Political Officer covering the Labor Party and the Political Officer covering the trade unions because of the overlap and all that. You had no problem like that?

GALENSON: No and neither did Sam Berger when he was there. He covered both of them.

Q: But Sam Berger was originally brought there by Harriman in Harriman's capacity as the Lend-Lease guy, so it was easy for him to do that. Let's just admit that this guy we admire so much, Sam Berger, came in another capacity.

GALENSON: He knew everybody. It was unbelievable. He could get a question raised in Parliament.

Q: That's right. We are asked to review the role of the AFL-CIO in the program of the Labor Attach# but in your day as you said...

GALENSON: In my day it was the AFL and the CIO.

Q: And they didn't try to affect one way or the other what you were doing?

GALENSON: Well, you know, one of the things I had to do was to take care of visitors. For example, one day we had a visit from two people from the Jewish Labor Committee, Sasha Zimmerman and Irving Brown and they came to Norway... They would try to persuade the Swedes to take in...

Q: Excuse me, was Irving [Brown] actually a representative of the Jewish Labor Committee?

GALENSON: Yes, he was. He was working for the ILG. As you know, the ILG financed him when he was working for a group trying to take the UAW away from the CIO.

Q: How well I remember that.

GALENSON: Anyway, their job was to try to get the Swedes to take in some refugees from Europe, Jewish refugees, and I went down to Stockholm with them and attended a dinner given for them by the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister. It was a Socialist Government. The Prime Minister's name... What was his name? He was quite a good guy.

Q: Erlander?

GALENSON: No, no. It was before then. This guy had been Prime Minister during the war. The guests had been around to the Foreign Office and gotten nowhere, but when we had dinner with the Prime Minister, he said, “How many of the refugees do you want us to admit?” and they mentioned a figure and he said, “You got them.”

Q: That's how decisions are made!

GALENSON: That's how decisions are made. Another thing. The first Congress of the Labor Party in Norway was in 1945 prior to the elections. They had a lot of delegates there. Among them were the Chairman and Secretary of the British Labor Party, which

had just won the election. The Chairman was Harold Laski at the time and the Secretary was a man by the name of Morgan Phillips. So Haakon called me up and said, “We need someone to drive these guys around a bit.” I said, “I'll be glad to do it.” So I became pressed into office as a chauffeur. And then there was the problem of getting hotel reservations for them. The hotels were controlled by the British military. They occupied them all and there were no rooms. You couldn't get any. So Haakon called me up and said, “Maybe your ambassador or you can get accommodations for them.” So I went to see the Ambassador and I said, “These guys are coming in and they can't get hotels for them.” He said, “Gee, I would love to have them at the Embassy. I always wanted to meet Harold Laski.” He said, “I had better talk to my British counterpart before I do it.” Well, he talked to the British Ambassador, who was a stuffy guy. They had just become the governing party. His Embassy had been of no help up to that point, but when the British Ambassador heard that the American Ambassador wanted to put them up, he immediately got good rooms for them.

Then I was in Denmark once—they were having some sort of an ILO meeting there in Copenhagen—and I was detailed to take care of an American delegate to it, a young Congressman from Washington [State] named Jackson. So I got to know him pretty well. I toured him all around Copenhagen and showed him the sights. So you got to meet some visiting firemen. That was part of the job and that was fun, you know, to meet these people.

Q: Well, it was fun but it also might have been valuable to the relations of the American Ambassador with his counterparts in the...

GALENSON: Jackson impressed me at the time as a very smart cookie, I must say. He was a new Congressman then, long before he was in the Senate.

Q: That's interesting because in 1946, when we had the first visiting Norwegian team from Norway to the United States, I was in the Labor Department and I had to do something

about entertaining them. We ran an affair, which Jackson was so interested in—I don't know whether this was before or after your experience—that he asked to be invited to this affair to meet these Norwegians. He had some Scandinavian forbearers, you know.

What about human rights? That's more of a current interest.

GALENSON: Yes, right. That was not an issue [at that time].

Q: Then the next issue to raise is a view of the Soviet influence, which, of course, you have already covered.

GALENSON: I did have some horrendous experiences with Russians in both Copenhagen and Oslo. I don't know whether you want to hear about them.

Q: Yes.

GALENSON: Well, I was sitting in the Embassy in Oslo one day and a [staff member] comes in and says that there is a delegation of Russians. They would like to speak to the Ambassador. I was the only one in the Embassy who knew any Russian, you see. She says, “Could you talk to them?” I said. “Okay.” So she ushers in these three guys, who were dressed literally in sackcloth, with a rope around their waists, and they were dirty. They had been brought in by the Nazis to build a great redoubt, which was going to be Hitler's last stand. They hollowed out a mountain on the Prime Minister's estate near Oslo. They were slave laborers. Really it was a horrible scene. What did they want? They said, “Well, we would like to go to the United States. We are speaking on behalf our camp.” There were about 20,000 people there. “We are speaking on behalf of our people. We would like to go to the United States.” I said, “Well, you know it's going to be very difficult.” “Well, okay to Canada.” I said, “I don't know; I can ask.” “If not Canada, Australia.” So you know, I talked to them. They said, “We have been visited by some Russian Army officers and they said, 'If you don't go back voluntarily, we will put in chains and drag you back.' “ Of course, that's what they eventually did. It was a horrible experience.

Then I had one other experience. This told me a little bit about Soviet life. I was leaving the Embassy in Copenhagen and the same thing happened. The secretary comes in and says, “There's a Russian Army officer, who would like to speak to somebody who knows Russian.” “Send him in.” This guy comes in. He's a major in the Russian Army, a real major type. He had a big gash on his neck, I remember, and a wound there, and we were talking a bit. He had been sent to Denmark by the Russian occupation army in Germany to buy provisions, to order food and so on for the Russian Army. So he was gassing around. He didn't seem to want to leave, so he suddenly says...

Q: He wanted to stay. That was your problem.

GALENSON: He suddenly says to me, “Are you Jewish?” I said, “Yes.” He began to cry. The tears were rolling... I mean, I never saw a human being collapse so utterly. Here was this Russian Army officer all of the sudden...

Q: What made him think you were Jewish?

GALENSON: I don't know. He just asked. I said, “Yes.” He collapsed. He cried. He said, “You don't know what it is like in the Soviet Union.” He said, “Here I have been wounded twice, but I am not here on behalf of myself. I know there is nothing you can do, but I have a younger brother, who is an artist, and he is talented and he cannot get into any art school or university because he's Jewish.” He said, “Now if you could arrange possibly to have some of his work reviewed by an American art journal, that would impress them and he would be admitted.” Then he unrolled some of the stuff he had brought with him, his brother's drawings. So I said, “Look, I'll do my best, but I can't guarantee it.” Now you know things like that make a real impression on you. These experiences with the depths of humanity, and this officer, just absolutely breaking down. Imagine. So you know it didn't take me long to confirm my view of the Soviet Union.

Q: I guess each of us has had experiences like that.

GALENSON: And there were more. You know you got the impression that this [the Soviet Union] was a vast prison camp, where they treated people horribly and they did.

Q: I just interviewed Harry Fleischman. Do you know Harry?

GALENSON: No.

Q: He was one of Norman Thomas' biographers, a close associate of his. During the Marshall Plan period he was with Voice of America and he was the first one who wrote the articles exposing the slave labor camps. Nobody believed him. You know in the early 1950s nobody believed him. He exposed the existence of the camps.

GALENSON: For anybody who was working in international labor the Cold War was until recently a very big factor.

Q: Oh, yes. Sure. Any comments on the role of other agencies, AID, USIA, the CIA?

GALENSON: That was after my time.

Q: I gather that your instructions from the desks in Washington were simply to do the reporting on the areas of interest that you have outlined.

GALENSON: Yes.

Q: Here is a question we have on the role of Congressional visits which you have just covered. We have now covered everything [on the questionnaire]. I would like then to spend some time on the ILO. In addition to your service as a Labor Attach#, you have followed international labor developments generally, and specifically you had a whole lot to do with the ILO. I give you free reign to discuss your observations about it and that critical volume you wrote about the ILO, and how the book was greeted. How did it affect policy, if

at all, and does 20/20 hindsight tell you that we should have been more active in another direction within the ILO and how would it have turned out?

GALENSON: Well, I spent a year there doing research work in the late 1960s.

Q: Is that the Institute of Labor Studies?

GALENSON: No, no. That was before that institute was created. This was in the Economics Division. I wrote a book at the time on the relationship between skill training and development. That's what I did for them and there were several people in the economics division, two or three of them, who were rather competent guys, but on the whole, I was not impressed at all with the ILO bureaucracy. I mean, for example, despite the fact that they all got very high salaries—at the time I was working there, I think there were 75 people in the ILO who were earning more money than anyone in the US Government except the President—what they were delivering for it was not very good. Well, I knew the Director General, Dave Morse, and they were starting something called the World Development Program. You had the World Economic Program, the world this program, the world that program, so they had to have a world program too, so he asked me to come back to Geneva...

Q: This would have been in the late 1960s or the early 1970s?

GALENSON: The early 1970s, yes. ...and help him set up this World Employment Program. So I went over there and I spent... I was commuting practically to Geneva for a couple of years. ...and we set up a program. The original idea was to send some missions to a select group of developing countries, three or four people to find out what their problems were, particularly their employment problems to see what could be done about improving their employment, which of course...

Q: Could you name the staffer ostensibly in charge of that area, whom they had to sort of bypass in order to have your work done? Fortin sound familiar to you?

GALENSON: Fortin, yes. No, Bernard Fortin, he was no problem. He became a good friend of mine. No, there was a guy, who came in a little bit later on, who was a Dutchman, who had been running a... He is now the head of the OECD Development Institute incidentally and he's a tough guy and we had trouble with him. But I didn't have any trouble with anybody there really, but what happened was the idea was to send a few of these...

Q: I wasn't suggesting trouble with him. I was suggesting that it might have been something that they should have been doing internally instead of getting an expert...

GALENSON: No, well, they wanted to get some outside advice and so on. I was working together with another guy—He was German originally but he was living in Britain at the time, a UN economist for a while, Hans Singer. He was an elderly, a very nice guy—and we were working together. The idea was to send these missions out to countries to find out what their problems were and what they thought they could do about them. After all these countries had some economists. Many of them had been trained in the West, and they knew better than we did what their problems were, the nature of them. So that was the idea. Well, the thing mushroomed in practice. What happened was that the ILO began to send these missions out. They sent one to Ceylon, Sri Lanka; they sent one to Kenya; they sent them to all over. Every agency had to be represented and so they ended up with instead of three or four people, about 30 to 40 people on each. And they began to do a blueprint on what the country should do...

Q: What do you mean by every agency, every agency within the ILO?

GALENSON: Every agency within the world... the UN, the World Bank, this and that. Every international agency had to be represented on these missions, right. And instead of finding out what these people...what their problems were, they stayed for a month, then they came back and secluded themselves for a month and wrote a report, a blue print of how to solve their employment problems. And then Dave Morse would go down and... I remember he went down to Colombia.. and with television and everything he presented this report to

the President of the republic: the ILO does this, you know. It was just nonsense! In a short time like that... The problems were very deep and very difficult and they still haven't been solved. But to think that these people could go in with this mishmash of a group and find a solution is nonsense. So I became rather quickly disillusioned with the World Employment Program. Then what happened was Dave Morse quit; a new Director General came in and I quit too because of the way things were going. They were planning to have a World Employment Conference and they were doing a lot of preparation for it. The same sort of stuff. The Labor Department in Washington asked me to monitor this and they sent over Louis Emmerich. He was head of the World Employment Program. Louis came over...

Q: An American?

GALENSON: No, a Dutchman. ...and he came over and we had a meeting at the Labor Department. That was really something.

Q: This was the Labor Department under Secretary Marshall by then?

GALENSON: Yes, under Ray Marshall, who, by the way, was a student of mine. He did his Ph.D. with me. I knew him very well. Anyway, I remember we had a meeting in the Labor Department. It was a real battle. The American employer representative was incensed. He wrote a letter to the Secretary of Labor complaining and the Secretary wrote a letter to the ILO Director General, “Do not send any of your insolent civil servants to the United States anymore.” Then I became the US Delegate to the Conference. One of the things they had done was to write... They had instructions to the Secretariat not to decide what to do in advance. They had written a complete draft of the final report and when we discovered that, BOY! So after that my relations with the ILO were not very good.

Q: Did that affect the US relationship toward the ILO?

GALENSON: Yes, it affected our relationship, but it wasn't that, you see, the AFL-CIO was mainly interested in the political aspects and what was happening at the annual

conference [was] that people would get up and lambaste Israel for violating ILO resolutions or whatever without any preliminary discussions. Normally, there's a long process before you accuse a country of doing something. You have to send a mission there; then it goes to the Committee of Experts; then there's a report; in a couple of years maybe you can say something. They didn't do that. They just got up there and they condemned Israel. They used it as a platform and this was the time of Vietnam and post-Vietnam. They were also condemning us. So the AFL-CIO delegates were pretty mad about the whole thing and they persuaded Carter to withdraw from the ILO. We did withdraw for three years, but then for some reason which escapes me we returned. I think Irving [Brown] got a little lonesome not meeting all his pals in Geneva. They liked to go over there.

Q: Well, the point is that, with respect to that and many other issues between the American labor movement and the foreign labor movements—and the one that Meany didn't understand fully—the name of the game for Irving [Brown] and Jay Lovestone was always the battle with the Communists. They got George Meany so worked up about how terrible —and they were right—things were not only in the ILO—I had it with respect to the O.E.C.D. where I was working—that Meany came to a very natural conclusion—Let's get the hell out of here—but that was not what Jay wanted and certainly not what Irving wanted, because his whole life was this battle and it was a good battle that they felt they were carrying on. Fascinating really.

GALENSON: Anyway, we did get out and not much happened in the interim while we were out, but then we went back.

Q: Well, they made some concessions, not significant ones, but sufficient concessions to give the United States an excuse for coming back to the ILO

GALENSON: Very few. They tried to tone down the rhetoric at these annual conferences.

Q: But on the question of Nazism and Israel being similarly evil, a compromise was never reached.

GALENSON: It was not only the anti-Israel but the anti-American tone of a lot of the discussion there. You would sit there and listen to these guys rattling on. I used to go in there sometimes and watch the American Delegation. Lane Kirkland was there; Irving of course was there; he was there every year. They liked it. Irving liked it. He loved to go there and schmooze with all these people.

Q: And engage in the rhetoric of the thing, you know.

GALENSON: Yes. Then we went back and things had quieted down a great deal. As far as I know there is very little controversial matter in the ILO now. What they do, I don't know. I've lost touch with them.

Q: Well, in the field of standards there is a mechanical function of reviewing and trying to improve the standards and making excuses for the developing countries for not following the standards and setting the policy of criticizing the United States for not following policies that no other countries do. I should say though that when I was in India and very critical of the fact that there was a tendency for the Indians to go along with this business of setting unrealistic international standards that they did not [themselves] apply, the delegate to the ILO from India once said to me, "You just don't have the idea. It's true that we don't follow these standards, but the fact that they exist gives the civil service employee and those who are functionaries in the civil service the opportunity to write memos and criticize our government for not following them." Sort of a weak argument but an understandable one. It did give them something. I just didn't like the haughty attitude they had toward the United States of pointing that out to us.

You published a book about that period, did you?

GALENSON: I published a book, yes. The book came out a year or two after we went back. This was the end of the Carter [Administration], just before the Reagan Administration. I was asked to do it by the 20th Century Fund. They financed it. And I traveled around the world looking at their [ILO] technical assistance programs in various countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Also I did a lot of work in Geneva in their files and when they...

Q: Do you want to identify the book by title

GALENSON: It was called, The International Labor Organization, An American View. Dave Morse was already gone [at that time from the ILO], but he was a member of the Board of the 20th Century Fund. When he read it, he was absolutely incensed. He said, “If this is published it will be a tremendous blow to international amity.” That was the end of our friendship.

Q: Without any respect to whether it was true or not?

GALENSON: That's right, I didn't criticize him personally, but what I did say was that the ILO was very pretentious in its claims. Its claims on human rights. They never got anybody out of jail. One of the things they claimed was that they practically overthrew Franco. Such nonsense. But before he died, Dave Morse did get in touch with me and said he regretted this thing, because actually I think when he read it closely he realized that it was not anti-Morse and that I had a point. As far as that was concerned I can never show my face any more in the headquarters in Geneva. They didn't like the book at all.

Q: Well, how do you feel about the US relationship to the ILO? Worth it, or too embarrassing to pull out?

GALENSON: I don't know. We pulled out of UNESCO for very good reasons. The ILO is not the worst of the international organizations, not the best but not the worst. None

of them does a very good job. They are staffed in general by people who are not terribly competent and who get paid a lot of money for doing mediocre jobs.

Q: People are selected on the basis of considerations that go beyond their technical ability. I don't know whether you ever met our son David [Weisz], who was seconded from the Labor Department to the ILO for four years. He was in the embarrassing position—He edited the English version of a French magazine of the ILO. That thing that comes out every couple months—and he sat in an office with a guy, who was a Russian... He was convinced that the guy was just a KGB overseer, because they needed people to watch other people, you know, but he didn't produce anything and it creates bad...Oh, they did play chess together. That's what he did. But there was no positive thing and there were so many of the people David felt, and I felt, were appointed there because there was an under-supply of people from some country or something like that.

GALENSON: Well, it was political. You see, originally during the 1930s the ILO recruited by giving exams in countries. They would set an examination in Washington, DC, for example...

Q: I didn't know that.

GALENSON: Yes, and on the basis of the exam results they would appoint people.

Q: Irrespective of the proportions of people corresponding to the proportions of the populations.

GALENSON: And it turned out, of course, that most of the [employees of the] Secretariat were British and French as a result. Well, after the war things changed. Then appointments became political. I knew well a guy from the Senegal, a black guy, who became head of the International Institute.

Q: He subsequently ran for Secretary General, but I don't think he was elected.

GALENSON: He was defeated. That's right. But these guys were all political appointees and they regarded as their jobs to entertain their people who came to Geneva. In fact whenever we were told, for example, in the Economics Division that a Russian was coming in, the Director would say, “Oh, my God!” because this guy was useless and moreover the Russians had... You see, most of the staff people were there on a permanent basis but the Russians would never do that. They would give a guy a two or three year appointment, then yank him back. And not only that, but he had to turn his salary over in Swiss Francs to the Embassy and got only part of it back. The rest he got in rubles when he got back to Russia. It was a way of earning foreign exchange.

Q: Oh, my God!

GALENSON: That's right. It was a well known policy in all the international agencies. The Russians were just milking us.

End of interview